Government of India from Government of Pakistan regarding environmental aspects of Siachen Glaciers, although media reports from Pakistan occasionally refer to the environmental benefits of the demilitarisation of the area. Also, in proportion to the vastness of the Siachen Glacier, the actual deployment of the troops is small, which can have negligible effect on its melting.

(c) Geological Survey of India has also undertaken studies on recession of several Himalayan glaciers, including Siachen Glacier. These studies revealed that the majority of glaciers of Himalayan region are passing through a phase of recession, as has been the case with the glaciers located in other parts of the world. The rate of recession in Himalayan region in different climatic zones is found to be variable in different years. This variable rate of recession can be attributed to the several climatic factors.

Special Agricultural Zones

*532. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN:
SHRI SANJAY RAUT:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to set up Special Agricultural Zones;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) There is no proposal under consideration in the Ministry of Agriculture to set up Special Agriculture Zones.

Environmental clearance to hydel power plant in Kerala

*533. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry had sent a team to examine the objections raised by certain quarters against the proposed 163 MW hydel power projects at the Athirapally Waterfalls in Kerala;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what are the findings of the expert team and Government decision regarding giving clearance to the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) to (c) A sub-committee of the Expert Appraisal Committee for River Valley and Hydroelectric Projects visited the proposed sites of Athirapally hydroelectric project during April 2007. Following are the findings:

- People living in Athirapally, whose income is mainly tourist dependent are agitated, efforts to assuage their worries have not been adequately addressed by KSEB.

- There are two tribal settlements— one with 18 families above the FRL and at the upstream side of the dam and the other with 58 families at downstream (about 400 mt from the dam) site of the dam— who somehow developed a strong notion that they would be displaced.

- During that period of power generation the intense flows spill over the crest of the weir into the stream without providing enough flows in the canals for irrigation. The tail end areas of the canals would be worst affected, particularly during late stages of the Rabi crop season.

- The present condition of the weir and the head reaches of the canals need repair. The low level sluices in the weir and the canal head reaches have large leakages. The ground water levels in the canal commands have been falling to the dissatisfaction of the people in the command. Drinking water supply is also consequently getting affected.

The site visit report of the sub-committee is being placed before the meeting of the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) scheduled to be held on 16th May, 2007 for its recommendation. After EAC's recommendations are available, Government will take a decision.